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Garrison Leadership: Enlisting Others

by COL Charles Allen (Ret.), U.S. Army War College

Command of a garrison requires a leader who understands it is unlike any other assignment. Writing for an earlier edition of the Journal of Installation Management (JIM), I offered a perspective to those officers about to assume garrison command and provided recommendations to help an incoming garrison leader make the most of the first 90 days in command (Allen, Journal of Installation Management online, Summer 2009). The key components of the leader transition were to prepare for command, to learn the command, and to establish a personal network of installation professionals.

The new garrison commander (GC) prepares by internalizing the Installation Management Campaign Plan and other Installation Management Command (IMCOM) policies and strategies, while learning directly from those with garrison experience. This edition of the Journal includes articles from garrison commanders that discuss the many facets of leadership and workforce development that the typical garrison makes available to its community—Soldiers, Civilians and Family members. The complexity of garrison operations is well established and there is the necessity to collaborate at multiple levels. But another, often overlooked, aspect of leadership development is the process by which the community receives and acculturates its new leader every

two or three years. Therefore, upon assuming command, the garrison commander should develop strong relationships with the garrison staff

Some Commanders had not worked with a predominantly Civilian workforce...add to that stakeholders—customers (family members, Host Nation politicians, US politicians, etc.). Suddenly you are forced to think (strategically) across several spectrums...the kinds and depth of tasks are also challenging - the GC has to know a little bit about a lot of things. -Region Director

and community members who are the constituents and key stakeholders, but also important mentors. One could say this is the paradox of leader and workforce development. In this case, the workforce contributes significantly to developing the leader.

Each GC receives missions from IMCOM and the Senior Commanders of their installations. Through the application of strategic planning, the GC sets the direction for the garrison and begins to move forward to execute the strategy to achieve the assigned mission set. For success, the GC has to be the leader, but must understand that leadership is different from previously held command assignments. The framework for this article builds upon the Kouzes and Posner (2008) concept of enlisting others. This framework includes the traditional *leading of the organization*, the unfamiliar *leading without authority*, and the potentially uncomfortable *leading up*.

Leading the Organization

Officers selected for garrison command understand and have been very successful in applying the basics of leadership as captured in our Army doctrine. *Field Manual 6-22 Army Leadership* (2006) provides a concise definition of leadership as “a process of providing **purpose**, **motivation**, and **direction** to accomplish the mission and improve the organization.”

Our officers have demonstrated great competence with direct leadership while in a variety of command and staff positions. Officers selected for garrison command have “made the cut” with successful company-level commands of tactical Modified Table of Organization and Equipment (MTOE) units and high performance in field grade assignments such as executive officer and operations officer for battalions and brigades. Many GC selectees have served as staff officers on division and higher-level staffs of such large and complex organizations.

As these officers transition to garrison command, the same leadership principles from operational units apply to leading the installation workforce and its staff. This garrison team consists of the directors and supervisors, the workforce, and the contractors who provide essential services for base support operations under the Common Levels of Support (CLS). The mem-



bers of this team must have a sense of **purpose** and understand what value they bring to the organization. That value is tied to the perception of doing meaningful work, which is powerful **motivation** for employees. The garrison command team should also communicate that it cares for the employees by providing the resources (e.g., people, funding, equipment, and time) to do the job, the training to do it well, and the developmental opportunities for self-improvement. The climate and culture of the organization should be such that each member sees himself as an integral part of a team that is necessary for the success of the organization. Early in the command (within the first 90 days), the GC should conduct an organizational diagnosis to assess the culture and command climate using the existing IMCOM tools of the organizational self-assessment (OSA). The OSA is a framework developed by the National Council for Performance Excellence that IMCOM has adopted to provide a holistic view of garrisons.

Every visit I make impresses me with the dedication of Civilian employees to Soldiers and Families. The folks at Ft Xxxx tell story after story of how deployments and redeployments run well because of the all the work they do to support.... No [extra] pay, no compensation, no big front-page story. But, day in and day out they want to do what's right.
-A Senior ACSIM Civilian

The **direction** for the workforce is provided not only by the strategic plan for the garrison, but also with policies and implementing guidance from the parent command, IMCOM. The key function of the commander is to assign priorities aligned with the core capabilities required from the garrison by its customers. This is especially important in an environment of scarce resources, competing requirements, and uncertainty. Hence, the strategic direction provided by the garrison commander with the vision and mission statement must be consistent with the daily realities faced by the workforce.

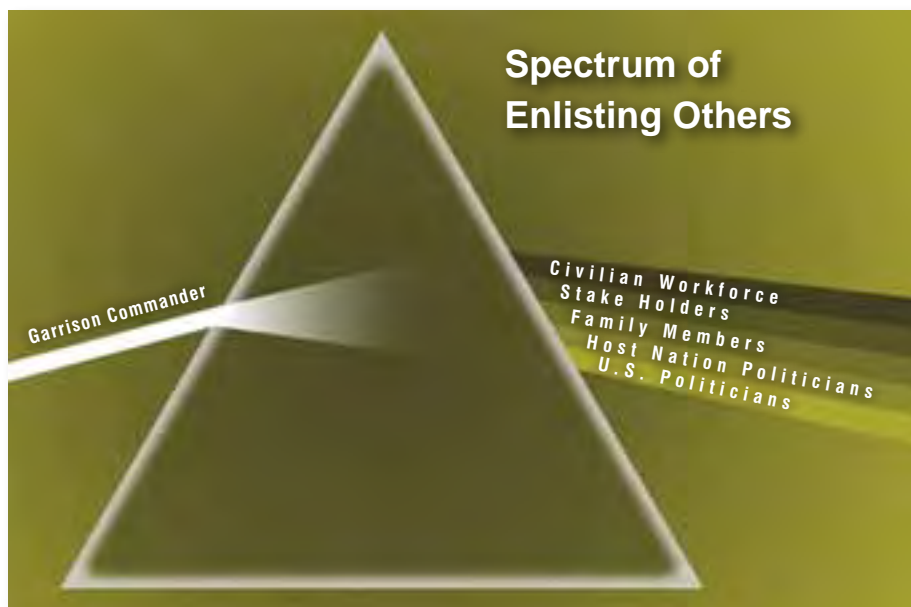
Leading an organization is probably the most natural and comfortable role for the garrison commander. While

the context may be different with a predominately Civilian and contractor workforce, the underlying leadership principles are the same. Successful commanders get out of the office and lead (not manage!) by walking around and talking to people at all levels—from the clerks and childcare providers to the range control specialists—in the organization. These leaders also use proven communication and recognition events such as workforce town hall meetings, annual “state of the community” briefs, and award ceremonies. The enduring leadership principles are to inform, engage, and demonstrate appreciation to the most essential element of the garrison—its people.

Leading without Authority

The more unfamiliar territory is leading either those who are not under the commander’s direct authority but to whom they have the responsibility to serve, or those who can assist in providing service to customers in the garrison. Jim Collins (2007) acknowledged the essential leadership requirements for public and civic organizations. Collins holds that leadership of hierarchical organizations is qualitatively different from the lateral leadership required for garrisons. In this context, leadership is more about influence, finding common purpose, and building consensus than about giving direction. The GC provides leadership for peers that are the tenant commanders, for the Family members

Figure 1: Spectrum of Enlisting Others.





and residents, for the members of the local community, and for the volunteers that support the installation.

For each of these groups, the policies of the garrison directly or indirectly affect the operation of the units and the quality of life of those associated with the installation. There are several examples that come to mind. For tenant units, access to quality ranges and facilities is critical to training for readiness in Core and Directed Mission Essential Task Lists (CMETL, DMETL). Soldiers and their Families are directly affected by the availability of child and youth services that are of immense importance with our Army's pace and frequency of deployments. The quality of life for installation users is indirectly influenced by the partnership the GC has with several tenant activities outside of the chain of command. These activities include Army and Air Force Exchange System, Defense Commissary Agency, Department of Defense Dependant Schools, as well as the Medical and Dental Command units. The GC must also develop partnership with public administration (county and city officials) and civic organizations (e.g, Chamber of Commerce) in the local community.

We have all experienced the good work of volunteers from both on-post and the local community members (retirees, veterans, and civic groups) that complement existing IMCOM programs. Where would we be without the volunteers who coach youth teams, organize chapel support programs, man information desks at clinics and hospitals, lead scouting activities, and raise funds for scholarships? From my

experiences, celebrating the contributions and successes of those who offer their time and energy is a worthwhile investment for the garrison and a primary purpose for annual renewals of the Community Covenant. The GC actions offered below provide an equivalency of purpose, motivation, and direction when leading without authority (Warner, 2002).

- Communicate a desired future.
- Create a common goal.
- Enhance relationships inside and outside the command.
- Embrace new opportunities.
- Build teams, create trust and manage conflict.
- Negotiate agreement and commitment among stakeholders.
- Strive for continuous improvement and excellence.
- Demonstrate conviction to values.
- Recognize others' success.

The GC should recognize that groups that are "outside chain of command" and volunteers are important stakeholders in the successful operation of the installation and, in turn, the greater community. As such, these stakeholders and their interests should be captured in the strategic planning process. This can be accomplished through representatives in the process or by soliciting input from focus groups. The

GCs have to go to the GC Conference with an intentional engagement strategy. After my first GC Conference, I made sure I had my "to do"/"to see" list for every other one I went to. I also took every opportunity to talk to any ACSIM/IMCOM SES that visited here.
-Garrison Commander

resulting installation strategic plan should have a vision that is shared among all, along with well-developed goals and strategies. The execution of the strategic plan requires collaboration and cooperation among the groups that make up the community. Feedback from these groups helps determine how well the garrison is doing and provides information on how to improve its operation. Success breeds success on the way to excellence.

Recognition through the Army Communities of Excellence (ACOE) program is the culmination of well-developed goals and successfully executed strategies. Customer service and satisfaction is the hallmark of excellence in installation management. The ACOE program is an annual competition that uses a modification of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award Criteria and showcases the good work garrisons do within their communities (Wilson, 2007). It illustrates the value of partnership among those who deliver essential services and provide for the quality of life for Soldiers and Families. Participation in the ACOE competition makes the garrison a better team and enables continuous improvement.

Leading Up

The most uncomfortable aspect of garrison leadership may be the necessity to lead those who are considered "bosses." For garrison commanders there are a number of "bosses." The garrison chain of command includes the Senior Commander of the installation, the Region Director, and the IMCOM Commander and Deputy Commander as well as their respective staffs. Wharton School Professor Michael Useem (2001) captured the



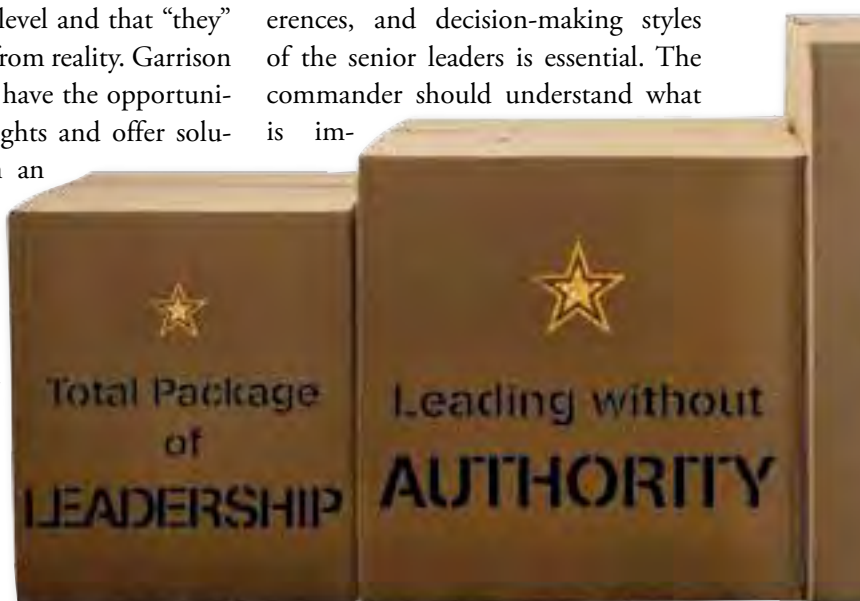
essence of this leadership challenge in *Leading Up: How to lead your boss so you both win*. Leading up is “a matter of offering a boss your strategic insights or persuading a superior to alter directions....It requires an ability to work in two directions at once, of stepping into the breach when nobody above you is doing so – and of listening to those below you when they have much to offer you.” (Useem, 2002). Leading up requires a potential shift in how the officer has operated in past assignments where the mission and priorities were well defined, the resources were relatively fixed, and the organization was inherently responsive to direction. In garrisons, each of these conditions may be challenged.

Several external factors affect garrisons. Army Force Generation (ARFORGEN), Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC), result in changing missions, priorities and, ultimately, resourcing. Garrison commanders have “ground-truth” appreciation of the unique requirements and the challenges of their garrisons. While the Assistant Chief of Staff for Installation Management (ACSIM) develops policy and IMCOM builds the supporting strategies from the corporate perspective, that centralized planning has to be executed in a decentralized manner at the garrisons. The garrison commanders are the first-line providers of common levels of support to their installations and must work with their Senior Commanders to identify how that is accomplished locally. This places the garrison commander in an awkward position when the policy and funding do not appear to meet the needs of the installation.

The garrison commander’s first responsibility in leading up is to inform and educate the Senior Commander. The Senior Commander must understand and be part of the strategic planning process for the garrison so that visions and strategies are aligned and complementary. For success, it is critical that divergent goals are addressed and resolved early. When there is a conflict, the garrison commander should engage the Region Director to make the case for flexibility in executing the IMCOM programs, to gain additional resources, or to suggest changes in policy and priorities. The garrison commander recognizes the same responsibility to lead up occurs with the leadership of IMCOM and ACSIM. Garrison commanders have the opportunity and the obligation to engage these senior leaders to advocate for their installations. In addition, commanders point out systemic issues that can hurt the performance of the Services and Infrastructure elements of the Army Core Enterprise Concept. We have all commented that the ubiquitous “they” from higher headquarters do not understand what is needed at our level and that “they” are disconnected from reality. Garrison commanders also have the opportunity to provide insights and offer solutions based upon an intimate understanding of their local installations and personally experiencing the challenges of implementing IMCOM strategies.

To lead up requires that the GC establish a relationship of trust and credibility with those higher in the chain of command. As Useem (2002) offered, “upward leadership is not about seizing power, undermining your boss, ingratiating yourself, or otherwise augmenting your stature at the expense of others. It is about serving the organization and the people it serves – whether customers, owners, or constituents.” The First Principle of service to others goes back to the Army definition where leadership is about accomplishing the mission and improving the organization. The engagement with senior leaders should never be self-serving or overly parochial. Garrison commanders are expected to advocate for their installations and their workforce. To be effective advocates, commanders must interact with those leaders who provide strategic direction and have access to resources.

In developing the relationship, there is balance with the frequency of contact, the amount and type of information provided, and discretion in when to engage. Knowing the personalities, preferences, and decision-making styles of the senior leaders is essential. The commander should understand what is im-





portant for senior leaders to know and consider as the leaders strive to accomplish their respective missions. The commander should have good appreciation of the issues, have completed a thorough assessment of the perceived problem, and offer viable solutions. Garrison commanders should be aware that competence is presumed by virtue of the command position, but confidence in one's judgment is earned in the relationship.

The Synergy of Enlisting Others

After my base support battalion command tour, I became the Chief of Inspections, United States Army Europe (USAREUR). As an Inspector General, I had the opportunity to visit each base support battalion (BSB) and area support group (ASG) (both are now designated as US Army Garrisons) and every installation in the command. With few exceptions, the commanders of those O-5 and O-6 level garrisons did not have prior experience with installation management. They were, however, like the garrison commanders of today,

charged with supporting an Army that had rotational deployments and were subject to short-notice missions. We in USAREUR were "On Point for the Nation." The base operations mission was the same—to provide bases to house and train combat-ready units, to provide quality of life for the Soldiers, Families, Civilians, and retirees in the community, and to enable the deployment of the units when called.

The commanders and their command team built upon their fundamental leadership skills to lead the workforce of Civilians and local national employees. The commanders realized that the success of their military communities was inextricably linked to partnering with tenant units, with the volunteer activities led by spouses and retirees, and with the members and leaders of the local German communities. The commanders established relationships of trust with the Senior Commanders that were developed by the garrisons'

demonstrated ability to fulfill core mission requirements in challenging environments (resourcing, competing priorities, and uncertainty). The most successful commanders transitioned from the focus on leading the organization to leading without authority and leading up to influence their bosses to accomplish the "Big Picture" goals. Garrison command requires that total package of leadership.

The synergy of combining the three leadership foci results in a qualitative increase in mission performance. How can one know? The four base support battalions in our 98th Area Support Group all placed in the top five for the USAREUR Army Community of Excellence (ACOE) Program in 1999 and, in 2002, Department of the Army recognized as the 417th BSB as a "Best ACOE" installation. During that timeframe, the base support battalion supported the deployments and redeployments of 1st Infantry Division and V Corps units to Bosnia, Kosovo, and Macedonia. It enabled the short-notice deployments of Corps assets out of the European theater. It provided for the well-being of the Families left behind and had a healthy relationship with our German hosts in the many surrounding communities. Then, as now, there were challenges and stressful times. As one reviews the list of ACOE Award winners in the 21st Century, the diversity of Army garrisons is apparent. Successful accomplishment of their mission in support of training (Fort A.P. Hill), forward-deployed forces (Japan and Germany), and power projection (Fort Bragg and Fort Stewart and Hunter Army Airfield) enables the Army mission. The IMCOM mission requires excep-





tional leaders who have the capability to lead at several levels (Allen, 2007) and across traditional organizational boundaries to “support expeditionary operations...and to provide a quality of life for Soldiers & Families commensurate with their service.”



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